

## Draft Rationale for SEPA and Climate Change Policy being Considered by King County

Washington State Senate Bill 6001<sup>i</sup>, passed in July 2007, and House Bill 2815<sup>ii</sup>, effective in June 2008, require the state to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 1990 levels by 2020.

In December 2007, Washington's Departments of Ecology and Community, Trade and Economic Development, in conjunction with the Center for Climate Strategies, released official emissions estimates for 1990 through 2020<sup>iii</sup>. Under a "business as usual" (BAU) scenario that assumes *no change* in public policies or citizen behavior, but includes *expected growth* in population, employment, business activity, and the built environment, these projections forecast statewide emissions of 121.9 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e) in 2020. However, state law mandates reductions to 1990's emissions levels: 88.4 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e, or 28 percent less than "business as usual" emissions.

To reach this ambitious reduction goal, each sector of the economy should do its part. If this burden is shared equally, each sector of Washington's economy would have to reduce annual emissions 28 percent below projected levels by 2020.

The 2020 target cannot be achieved overnight, but must be approached with more gradual innovations and policy shifts growing over the coming years. Yet to reach the long-term goal, policy must begin to encourage low-GHG development as soon as possible. Even though new development creates completely new sources of emissions, King County (KC) intends to place no special burden on new development. Like all other economic sectors, new development in the county will be expected to achieve emissions reductions consistent with statewide goals.

Development projects built in 2010 will still be in existence in 2020, so should have use-phase emissions consistent with the 2020 target: that is, equal to 1990 emissions. The state's average annual 2010 and 2011 forecasted emissions (using the same methodology as the 2020 forecast) are 104 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e; 1990 levels are 15 percent below this. So to be consistent with the target reductions of WA state law, KC is considering policy that would require that all new developments reduce use-phase emissions to 15 percent below the BAU emissions expected for 2010.

Based on the above rationale, KC is considering policy that would require that for 2010-2012, all emissions from new development projects be 15 percent below a 2010 BAU baseline, with BAU being defined as an action designed to comply with minimum county, state and federal regulations. This 15 percent below BAU standard will be updated after 2012 based on updates to state GHG emissions levels, data regarding GHG emissions from developments, and evolving legal mandates.

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<sup>i</sup> Washington Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6001. Climate Change – Mitigating Impacts. Available: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2007-08/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Law%202007/6001-S.SL.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Washington Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 2815. Providing a framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the Washington economy. Available: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2007-08/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Law%202008/2815-S2.SL.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Reference Case Projections, 1990-2020, Dec. 2007. Available: [http://www.ecy.wa.gov/climatechange/docs/WA\\_GHGInventoryReferenceCaseProjections\\_1990-2020.pdf](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/climatechange/docs/WA_GHGInventoryReferenceCaseProjections_1990-2020.pdf)